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# Role of Ex-General Is Contra Mystery

*Ex-Diplomat Skilled in Secret Missions*

By Charles R. Babcock  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Richard V. Secord, the retired Air Force two-star general cited in recent accounts as a key figure in providing private aid to the contras in Nicaragua, appears well-versed in the methods of clandestine warfare and arms sales.

The 54-year-old West Point graduate is among the most enigmatic characters in the mysterious relationship that links the U.S. government, private aid groups and the rebels trying to topple the leftist Sandinista government.

One contra official said recently that Secord was "instrumental" in helping them build a privately funded airborne supply line while money for the war was cut off by Congress between October 1984 and last month.

Telephone records from El Salvador show that several calls were placed to Secord's home and business in Northern Virginia last summer from "safe houses" used by the crew of a C123 cargo plane shot down over southern Nicaragua Oct. 5.

Secord has acknowledged selling one small airplane last year to the contras, or counterrevolutionaries. He has been quoted as saying he occasionally advised the insurgents on "how they ought to design their efforts . . . But I'm not commanding the contra air force. If I were, I'd be down there."

Secord was attached to the Central Intelligence Agency for secret air missions in Laos in the late 1960s. He headed the Air Force military mission to Iran from 1975 to 1978 and was deputy to the head of a planned 1980 mission to rescue

American hostages in Iran that was never carried out.

Retired Army Lt. Gen. James B. Vaught, the head of the proposed rescue mission, called Secord "a top-notch airman and a great American. I will say that to anyone, anytime, anywhere."

When the Reagan administration took office in 1981, Secord became the first military officer to be named deputy assistant secretary of defense for the Middle East. In that job he lobbied for the controversial sale of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) planes to Saudi Arabia and got to know National Security Council officials, including Robert C. McFarlane and Marine Lt. Col. Oliver L. North.

He has told acquaintances that he thinks that the Defense Department, rather than the CIA, should direct paramilitary operations, such as the covert war in Nicaragua, because the CIA doesn't have "the will or the manpower."

Secord is out of the country and couldn't be reached for comment this week. In an interview in mid-October, he denied reports that he had been a point man in raising Saudi Arabian money for the contras.

Secord's attorney, Thomas C. Green, said his client did not receive phone calls from the safe house. Green questioned the authenticity of the records. "No one has produced any phone records," he said.

The phone logs also show calls to a White House number belonging to National Security Council staffer North, who has been cited as the chief liaison between the Reagan administration and the contras while the financial aid was cut off.

Secord became controversial late in his career. He came under inves-



**RICHARD V. SECORD**  
... third star never awarded

tigation because of his acquaintance with Edwin P. Wilson, a former CIA contract employee who has been convicted on several charges, including shipping guns and explosives to Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi in the 1970s.

Secord was never charged, but a promotion to three-star general didn't come through. Friends said he resigned because of what he considered unfair coupling of his name with Wilson's.

A month before he resigned, Secord won a \$2 million judgment in a slander and libel suit against a former Wilson aide who accused him in a CBS-TV interview of helping Wilson do business in Iran. The aide has since sued CBS, claiming that the network edited his words to express the accusation.

Since retiring in May 1983, Secord has been a Pentagon adviser on special operations warfare and a business partner of an Iranian native, Albert Hakim.

Their company, Stanford Technology Trading Group International, has had among its clients a California steel company that makes airplane shelters. Acquaintances said Secord has been trying to sell the shelters to governments in the Middle East.